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Chicks, Girls and Choice: Redefining Feminism

At the height of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s, the word *chick* was considered an insult, a demeaning diminutive, casting independent young women as delicate, fluffy creatures. *Girl* was perhaps worse, infantilizing grown women. By contrast, *choice* signaled women's power over their bodies. Defiantly singular, it meant a woman's right to choose to end a pregnancy or to elect – not submit to – motherhood.

A generation later, *girl*, like *chick*, has been revived, wielded knowingly by women themselves to convey solidarity and signal empowerment. *Girlpower*. "You go, *girl*." *Chicks* rule! Uncoupled from adjectives such as *tough*, *sorority*, or *hot*, *chick* is now an adjective itself: chick lit, chick flick, chick culture. Surprisingly cosmopolitan, *chick* conveys *chic*. At the same time, the right to choose is no longer singular but endlessly plural: career choices, lifestyle choices, fashion choices.

Many women who came of age during the "second wave" of feminism bemoan the diffusion of reproductive choice to choices of hair color, lipstick, shoes, and handbags, all reductively narrow, false consumer choices. To them, young women have – at best – misunderstood their struggle to provide women with control over their bodies. At worst, the younger generation, or "third-wave," inheritors of their predecessors' success in securing access to education, politics and the professions, take such gains for granted and have trivialized the efforts that led to the publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, devoting themselves to superficial self-transformation through makeup and fashion. If once the *f*-word was *fashion*, it's now *feminism*.¹ Femininity, considered, since the "first wave" led by Mary Wollstonecraft and others, a crippling cultural construction that defined women as fragile and emotional, is now embraced as a choice. Young women are free to be *girlie*.

These three simple words – *chick*, *girl*, and *choice* – represent and register generational redefinitions of womanhood and women's rights, femininity and feminism. More than simple linguistic changes, they trace shifts in ideas and ideology. They mark transformations of women's studies, from politics to popular culture, literature to film.

FROM THE SECOND WAVE TO THE THIRD WAVE: WOMEN TO GRRLS

As Astrid Henry has noted, the division between second-wave feminists of the 1970s and young women of the current era has been persistently described as a generational divide between mothers and daughters.² As such, it perhaps unfairly links the politically edged feminism of the women's movement with the old and third-wave feminism of the current millennium with the new. It does neatly capture, however, the dynamics of rebellion between the two movements.

Third-wave feminism has, mistakenly in our view, been called "postfeminism" which implies that it rejects feminist ideology, or, alternatively, moves beyond it seeing no need for feminism now that women have achieved much of what they were originally fighting for. By contrast, those classed as part of the third wave have not abandoned women's concerns, but changed the strategies for highlighting and exploring them.

Third-wave feminism took shape by rejecting what it perceived as the hectoring, critical tone of second-wave feminism. In *The New Feminism*, Natasha Walter described it as "man-hating,"³ while Naomi Wolf described it as "victim feminism."⁴ To Katie Roiphe, it was rigidly puritanical.⁵ Young women bristled at criticisms of men as the source of their problems rather than potential partners in sex. In particular, they resented being presented as powerless victims of patriarchy. In contrast to viewing sex as a site of oppression and domination as many second-wave feminists did, third-wave feminists argued in favor of women's sexual freedom and pleasure as signs of independence and power.

This is not to say that they did not – or do not – at times feel disempowered. As Imelda Whelehan has detailed, second-wave feminism may have succeeded in opening up professional and educational opportunities for women but at the cost of further complicating their lives rather than alleviating their burdens. She notes a "huge chasm between the aspirations of their personal lives and those of their professional lives" and argues that "freedoms of choice are presented either covertly or overtly as burdens to the women in question, as if they were juggling two entirely separate identities."⁶ Freedom of reproductive choice or professional choice left too many other choices. "Second Wave feminism could not solve some of the most intimate problems for women – how to conduct heterosexual relationships, how to negotiate self-identity, and how to deal with 'power'."⁷

In defense of the second wave, it can be said that all of these third-wave reactions already had their roots in the earlier movement. But whether or not such charges against second-wave feminists are true or fair is largely beside the point. The real issue is the perception of the young women who are responding to it. And in their minds, the angry feminism of the second wave is a detriment. That issue is clearly explored in fiction focused on third-wave women. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget, trying to stifle her friend's anti-male ravings, says, "there is nothing so unattractive to a man as strident feminism."⁸ Like Bridget, Alison Pearson's protagonist Kate Reddy in *I Don't Know How She Does It* deals with many of the same problems that confronted second-wave feminists; and like Bridget, Kate questions many – though by no means all – of their values and assumptions. Kate asks herself:

Do I believe in equality of the sexes? I'm not sure. I did once, with all the passionate certainty of someone very young who knew absolutely everything and therefore nothing at all. It was a nice idea, equality – noble, indisputably fair. But how the hell was it supposed to work?⁹

Trying to balance work with motherhood, she wonders: “Back in the seventies, when they were fighting for women’s rights, what did they think equal opportunities meant: that women would be entitled to spend as little time with their kids as men do?”¹⁰ Kate admits she is fighting a battle she cannot win:

There have been times over the past year when I have tried to explain to my daughter – I felt she was old enough to hear this – why Mummy has to go to work... Because Mummy has a job she is good at and it’s really important for women to work as well as men. Each time the speech builds to a stirring climax – trumpets, choirs, the tearful sisterhood waving flags...

Unfortunately, the case for equal opportunities, long established in liberal Western society, cuts no ice in the fundamentalist regime of the five-year-old.¹¹

Given the intimate nature of this generation’s concerns as women, the nature of feminist engagement has changed. Rather than direct political action, the strategies of third-wave feminism are diffused, spread primarily through popular culture.¹² As Carol Dole has argued, “for the most part third-wave feminism is closer to an attitude of confidence than to an agenda. Many young women share the third-wavers’ world view that a woman should be whatever she wants to be without labeling that view as feminist or even recognizing the term *third-wave*.”¹³ To many of them, “feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it – it’s simply in the water.”¹⁴

Third wavers navigate a sea of visual and aural media: film, television, magazines, and music. Part of their negotiation with popular culture has been the deliberate appropriation of terms that would have made second-wave feminists cringe. The Riot Grrls emerged in the early 1990s as an effort of female punk-rock bands, such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile and 7 Year Bitch. But, as fans’ websites contend, the phrase became an ideology, a movement to empower women. One website styles itself as a “shrine” dedicated to “all those girls who wish their gender started with a grrrrrow!”¹⁵

The source of grrl power is female sexuality, as Bikini Kill’s album “Pussy Whipped” (1993) defiantly boasted. From HBO’s *Sex and the City* to *Bust* magazine and beyond, “a new breed of sexual woman is being celebrated in our culture.”¹⁶ The members of this “New Girl Order” as *Bust* editor Debbie Stoller styled the girl power rebellion, defiantly embrace sexuality as its means: “Our mission is to seek out pleasure wherever we can find it. In other words, if it feels good, screw it.”¹⁷ The title of Stoller’s essay, “Sex and the Thinking Girl,” obviously plays on *Sex and the Single Girl*, the title of Helen Gurley Brown’s 1962 bestseller. At once she embraces the message of sexual liberation first advanced by the creator of *Cosmopolitan*, and distances the “new girls” from the old, implying that young women are consciously seeking pleasure rather than using their bodies as tokens of exchange with men.

As Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards note, however, many of these young women are clearly unaware of or unconcerned with the political implications of their attitudes. A recent column in the *New York Times* commented on the self-presentation of young women on online sites such as MySpace.com, Facebook, and Xanga. The sites' users, the writer explains, "are in their early to mid-20's; they're out of school but have no expectation they should marry soon. They're highly mobile, half-teen/half-adult, looking for a life plan and in between the formal networks of school, career and family." He continues:

To get the attention of fast-clicking Web surfers, many women have posed for their photos in bikinis or their underwear or in Penthouse-parody, 'I clutch my breasts for you' positions. Here's a woman in a jokey sadomasochistic pose. There's a woman with a caption: 'Yes, I make out with girls. Get over it' – complete with a photo of herself liplocked with a buddy.

The girls are the peacocks in this social universe. Their pages are racy, filled with dirty jokes and macha declarations: 'I'm hot and like to party. Why have one boy when there are plenty to go around?!'¹⁸

A quick glance at such sites confirms the writer's assessment.

Second-wave feminists obviously criticize this embrace of feminine sexuality as objectifying women and perpetuating women's sexual subordination to men. It has also been mocked in the popular press as "do-me feminism," "babe feminism," and "bimbo feminism."¹⁹ But comparison with an earlier redefinition of sexuality is telling. Just as homosexual activists transformed the disparaging term *queer* into a slogan to proclaim solidarity and increase their cultural visibility – "We're here. We're queer. Get used to it." – so the girls seek to reclaim and refashion their sexuality, to unsettle traditional images of feminine virtue by substituting an image of themselves as "lusty feminists of the third-wave."²⁰

CHICK AND BITCH, BIDDY AND BRIDGET

Like *girl*, the appellation *chick* was once seen as demeaning to women, with its obvious invocation of the fluffy, yellow hatchling. Combined with its implication of cowardice, it suggests fragility and vulnerability. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term originated in Middle English, as *chike*, a variant of *chiken*, denoting a young chicken and sometimes the young of any bird. Since the 1300s, the term has also been applied to human offspring, often as a term of endearment.

As a result of its association with children, historically the word is also linked to *chickabiddy* or, more simply, *biddy*. According to Evan Morris, the "Word Detective," *biddy* first appeared in the early 17th century and "probably came from the nonsense syllables used to call chickens – something like 'here biddybiddybiddy,' I suppose. By the late 18th century 'biddy' had been adopted as a derogatory slang term for women, much in the same unfortunate way that 'chick' was in the 1960's."²¹ By that time, however, *biddy* was invariably prefixed by "old" making it far more offensive to women than *chick*, which at least retained its implication of youth.

As an informal term for a young woman, equivalent to *dame* or *skirt*, *chick* is purported to have been first recorded in black slang in 1927.²² In jazz-age slang, a sophisticated young

woman of the late 1930s and early 1940s was a *hip* or *slick chick*.²³ In 1940s Britain, the term was adopted by the “dance fanatics and Teddy Boys” to refer to one’s girlfriend.²⁴ These later uses further positioned the woman as a possession or property.

Thus, by the 1960s and ’70s, the term’s original use as a gesture of flattery or admiration was beside the point. It positioned women as the property of men, as children and, worse, as animals, like the far more pejorative *bitch*.

However, as with *girl*, both *bitch* and, more popularly, *chick* have been adopted by women themselves in an effort to divest the terms of their derogatory power. The editors of *Bitch* magazine, which is celebrating its ten-year anniversary, explain their choice of title:

When it’s being used as an insult, ‘bitch’ is most often hurled at women who speak their minds, who have opinions and don’t shy away from expressing them. If being an outspoken woman means being a bitch, we’ll take that as a compliment, thanks.

Furthermore, if we take it as a compliment, it loses its power to hurt us. And if we can get people thinking about what they’re saying when they use the word, that’s even better.

And, last but certainly not least, ‘bitch’ describes all at once who we are when we speak up, what it is we’re too worked up over to be quiet about, and the act of making ourselves heard.²⁵

Wielded simultaneously as a noun and a verb, *bitch* serves, rather than undermines, feminism, as the magazine’s subtitle, *Feminist Response to Pop Culture*, makes clear. The magazine’s mission is to “be a fresh, revitalizing voice for feminism, one that welcomes complex arguments and refuses to ignore the contradictory and sometimes uncomfortable details that constitute the realities of women’s lives.”²⁶ Like *Bust*, *Bitch* also styles itself as “girl-friendly” while advocating a critical stance toward received ideas of feminism:

Bitch is about formulating replies to the sexism that we see every day. It’s about critically examining all the images of femininity and feminism that are thrown at us. It’s about forging connections between the sociocultural messages we get and the commercial agendas of who’s behind them. It’s about asking ourselves and each other questions: Where are the girl-friendly places in the mass media? Where are the things we can see and read and hear that don’t insult our intelligence? How can we get more of them?²⁷

Despite the charges that third-wave feminists have become dupes of popular culture and cogs in the consumerist machine, they are instead employing contemporary media— from magazines to literature, television to film – to engage young women in issues directly relevant to women’s lives.

The case of *chick*’s transformation, and its place in popular culture, is far more complex. It can be argued that the term has eclipsed both *girl* and *bitch* in terms of its visibility in the media. No mere wave in the world of publishing, chick lit has been a veritable “commercial tsunami,”²⁸ owing to the success of Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and Candace Bushnell’s *Sex and the City*. Both books achieved crossover success: the HBO series inspired

by Bushnell's book arguably eclipsed its source, while the feature films based on Fielding's *Bridget Jones* earned millions.²⁹

Both Fielding's and Bushnell's novels appeared in 1996. Both were originally based on the authors' newspaper columns detailing the complexities of young urban women's lives as they struggled to balance professional success with personal satisfaction through intimate relationships. The books subsequently classed as chick lit feature fallible heroines, employing a confessional style to appeal to readers who often identify with the heroines' battles with their bosses, boyfriends, and body image.

Originally, the term, however, had nothing to do with the books that now bear the moniker *chick*. In fact, the first use of the term applied to literature was meant to be ironic. Novelist Cris Mazza adopted it as the title for a collection of avant-garde fiction by women she published with Jeffrey DeShell in 1995: they called the collection *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction*. She explains the choice:

The fictions we had compiled were simultaneously courageous and playful; frank and wry; honest, intelligent, sophisticated, libidinous, unapologetic, and overwhelmingly emancipated. Liberated from *what?* The grim anger that feminists had told us ought to be our pragmatic stance in life. The screaming about the vestiges of the patriarchal society that oppressed us. Liberated to *do what?* To admit we're part of the problem. How empowering could it be to be *part* of the problem instead of just a victim of it? I can't remember the titles we rejected, but the one we ultimately chose encompassed all of the above: *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction* (FC2, 1995).³⁰

Their second volume, *Chick-Lit: No Chick Vics* (FC2, 1996), makes even more overt the collection's intent to rebel against the victim mentality of second-wave feminism.

As Mazza points out, the first use of the term has been mistakenly credited (by the Word Spy website) to journalist James Wolcott. Writing in the *New Yorker* in May 1996, Wolcott criticized Maureen Dowd and her contemporaries for their "popularity-contest coquetry."³¹ He dismissed their "sheer *girlishness*" and "flirtational writing": "Today a chick is a postfeminist in a party dress, a bachelorette too smart to be a bimbo, too refined to be a babe, too boojy to be a bohemian."³² According to Mazza, Wolcott, who mentions her collection of postfeminist fiction, "seemed to be describing not *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction* but the chick lit yet to come," which she classes "along with Hooters restaurants and celebrity boxing."³³ The ironic *chick* sensibility her collection championed was not embraced, nor was it hoping to be, by consumer culture. Instead, it was avant-garde and edgy, likely to unsettle rather than foster reader identification.

What is now commonly known as chick lit deliberately does the reverse. Targeting young women, chick-lit marketers have tapped into girl culture, often employing its signature color – pink – on covers and bookstore displays. Cognizant of young women's immersion in consumer culture, chick-lit covers feature staples of feminine fashion, such as handbags and high heels. Perhaps as a result, chick-lit novels have been criticized as mere commodities themselves, as trifles with the shelf life of a pair of Jimmy Choos or, worse, as frivolous books

supporting, rather than challenging, consumer culture that feature “helpless girls, drunken, worrying about their weight.”³⁴

And yet, the enormous popularity of chick lit and the films and television programs it has inspired, such as *Sex and the City*, attests to its resonance with a young female audience. Fans routinely stress their identification with the heroines of chick lit, suggesting that these texts are popular not because they are escapist “froth” but because they tap into contemporary women’s struggles and fears. Readers gravitate, in particular, to the protagonists’ fallibility: these are not the flawless women of romance fiction waiting to be recognized by their “perfect” man, but women who make mistakes at work, sometimes drink too much, fail miserably in the kitchen, or “fall for any of the following: alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics, people with girlfriends or wives, misogynists, megalomaniacs, chauvinists, emotional fuckwits or freeloaders,” to quote Bridget Jones.³⁵

When she confesses, “I am a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture,”³⁶ Bridget does not mean it as a rallying cry for the embrace of fashion and sex tips. Instead, she recognizes the debilitating impact it has had on her conception of herself: “[I] have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices.”³⁷ The novel, like *Bitch* magazine, calls into question the role of the popular media in young women’s lives employing the media itself to initiate reflection and critique.

If, as Mazza notes, however, the essays in her collection were intended to make women see they were “part of the problem” and to resist the “grim anger” of feminism, then they may be closer to contemporary chick lit than she acknowledges. In her preface to *Chick-Lit*, Mazza writes: “It’s writing that says that women are independent and confident, but not lacking in their share of human weakness & not necessarily self-empowered; that they are dealing with who they’ve made themselves into rather than blaming the rest of the world.”³⁸ This emphasis on women’s fallibility runs throughout commercial chick lit. The difference between the two literary chicks may lie more in attitude or tone than in philosophy.

While it would be unfair to charge second-wavers with having no sense of humor – that was, after all, one of the earliest and most frequent anti-feminist attacks against the Women’s Movement – the predominant tone of most second-wave literature is undeniably serious. The humour that did become a central part of the movement was largely based on the discrepancy between traditional images of women as weak, submissive, and dependent and the new image of a strong, powerful, independent woman. Think of the classic second-wave jokes:

“A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.”

“Women belong in the House – and the Senate.”

Subtitle below a photograph of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir: “But can she type?”

By contrast, women of the third wave approach nearly all aspects of life with humor – whether sharp-edged satire or light-hearted laughter. That humor most often resides in the third-waver’s perception of herself: that is, in her recognition of the ironic distance between the woman she dreams of being – the perfect, artificial woman her magazines and movies and mother tell her she should be – and the flawed, very real woman she is. The third-waver knows that she

cannot “have it all”, and she exploits that knowledge of her limitations for laughs. Chick lit protagonists make constant use of this humorous, ironic, self-deprecating tone. Once again Bridget Jones and Kate Reddy provide ideal examples.

Thinking she has at last understood “the simple difference between home cooking and restaurant food,” Bridget plans an elaborate dinner party, convinced that it “will be marvellous” and that she “will become known as a brilliant but apparently effortless cook.”³⁹ In reality, the effort overwhelms her: the blue string she uses to “tie flavor-enhancing leek and celery together”⁴⁰ turns her soup bright blue. Her velouté of cherry tomatoes comes out “foaming and three times its original volume” because, she surmises, she must have left dishwashing liquid in the blender.⁴¹ The thirty-six oranges she spent two hours slicing finely for confit create a dessert indistinguishable from marmalade. “Michelin-star cookery?” she asks. “Kwik-fit, more like.”⁴²

Similarly, Kate Reddy, the harried working mother of Alison Pearson’s *I Don’t Know How She Does It*, finds a constant source of humor in her own inability to live up to the ideal. The opening scene of the novel finds Kate in the kitchen at 1:37 a.m. trying to “distress” store-bought mince pies in an effort to make them look homemade for a function at her daughter’s school. Kate explains: “Women used to have time to make mince pies and had to fake orgasms. Now we can manage the orgasms, but we have to fake the mince pies. And they call this progress.”⁴³ While able to admit her failure as a mother to herself, Kate hides it from her own mother:

I’d rather Mum thought I was a failure at work than a stranger to my children. She thinks I have it all and she’s so pleased for me. I can’t tell her, can I? It would be like finding out that after Cinderella got to live in the palace, the Prince put her back on hearth-cleaning duty.⁴⁴

Heather Hewett points out that both Helen Fielding’s and Alison Pearson’s novels “feature a narrator who, while prone to self-recrimination and self-doubt, manages to laugh at herself and others in the most painful of situations.”⁴⁵

This shift in agency is key to the differences in humor between second-wave and third-wave feminist texts. Imelda Whelehan has argued that Lisa Alther’s *Kinflicks* (1976), presents a “kind of self-mocking humor that is often at odds with the narratives of pain recounted within the main body of the texts.”⁴⁶ Divided between first- and third-person narratives, *Kinflicks* employs humor in the sections presented in the heroine’s own voice. Note that in the novel, however, such moments are not sustained, which has led critics to charge that the humor is so at odds with the disturbing violence of the rest that it implies the heroines are incapable of taking life seriously. One wonders, in fact, how readers managed to find scenes of electrocution by vibrator and failed suicide at all funny. Consider this description of decapitation: “The next instant, Eddie’s head flew off her shoulders and bounced and spun across the ice like a crazed basketball.”⁴⁷

Passages such as these, recounted in the third-person, mock characters from without, placing readers, like the narrator, in a position of witnessing and judging their failings. Chick lit, by contrast, sustains the first-person point of view, as the heroine exposes her own flaws, leading readers to empathize with her. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Bridget recounts her first experience as

a reporter for the *Good Afternoon!* television show. It opens, "Have never been so humiliated in my life."⁴⁸ Expecting to interview firefighters at the Lewisham station, Bridget discovers that she is supposed to slide down the pole into the shot and then begin her interview. She mistakenly begins sliding before her cue and finds herself climbing back up the pole as the camera turns on. Her producer boss yells into her earpiece: "Bridget! We're on you ... You're meant to be sliding down the pole, not climbing up it. Go, go, go!" She drops, but by the time she reaches the bottom discovers they have run out of time and at her producer's frantic instruction to "wind it up, wind it up" can only think to say "and now back to the studio."⁴⁹

In similar fashion, following Bridget's inappropriate appearance at the Tarts & Vicars party in full bunny girl costume, having missed the message that the theme had been abandoned, she discovers her boyfriend Daniel is having an affair with an American woman. Sizing Bridget up, the impossibly svelte woman – whom Bridget has discovered naked in Daniel's apartment – remarks, "I thought you said she was *thin*."⁵⁰ These paired scenes not only recount Bridget's humiliation, but validate Bridget's fears about the inadequacy of her appearance. In both, she shows that she is indeed being sized up – by the Country Casuals set at the party and by her rival for Daniel's affection. The audience does not adopt their critical point of view, but hers. Readers not only sympathize with her for being betrayed by Daniel but also identify with the injustice of being measured against capriciously imposed standards of physical beauty.

Still, in spite of their obvious differences and disagreements, second-wave and third-wave feminists share a significant number of issues and concerns. The word that most clearly links them might, in fact, be *choice*. In the near future the two waves might well find themselves united in working to overcome threats to their ability to choose – whether political threats against reproductive freedom or pop culture threats against individual identity.

Inevitably, it is the new generation who will have the final word. In a revealing exchange in *Bridget Jones's Diary* Mark Darcy, the romantic hero, speaks with his snobbish would-be fiancée Natasha:

"What I *resent*, though...is this, this sort of, arrogant individualism which imagines each new generation can somehow create the world afresh."

"But that's exactly what they *do*, do," said Mark Darcy gently.⁵¹

And so they do.

- 1 Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, *The F-Word: Feminism in Jeopardy: Women, Politics, and the Future* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2004).
- 2 Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004), 3.
- 3 Natasha Walker, *The New Feminism* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 36.
- 4 Naomi Wolf, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (New York: Random House, 1993).
- 5 Katie Roiphe, *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993).

- 6 Imelda Whelehan, *The Feminist Bestseller: From Sex and the Single Girl to Sex and the City* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 162.
- 7 Ibid, 218.
- 8 Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (London: Penguin, 1996), 18.
- 9 Alison Pearson, *I Don't Know How She Does It: The Life of Kate Reddy, Working Mother* (New York: Random House, 2002), 183.
- 10 Ibid., 262.
- 11 Ibid., 9.
- 12 Some do urge political action, particularly on social issues: such issues as child sexual abuse, AIDS awareness, self-mutilation, body image, and eating disorders (Baumgardner and Richards 21). Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier's *Catching a Wave* "calls for a third wave of feminism that is politically conscious, grounded in the realities of life in the twenty-first century, and willing to engage in collective action in order to address injustice" (10).
- 13 Carol M. Dole, "The Return of Pink: Legally Blonde, Third-Wave Feminism, and Having It All," in *Chick Flicks: Contemporary Women at the Movies*, Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, eds (forthcoming).
- 14 Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 17.
- 15 "Riot Grrls." <http://www.techsploitation.com/socrates/riot.grrls.html>
- 16 Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 109.
- 17 Debbie Stoller, "Sex and the Thinking Girl," in *The Bust Guide to the New Girl Order*, Marcelle Karp and Debbie Stoller, eds (New York: Penguin, 1999), 79.
- 18 David Brooks, "Bondage and Bonding Online," *The New York Times*, January 8, 2006. select.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/opinion/08brooks.html
- 19 Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 111.
- 20 Stoller, "Sex and the Thinking Girl," 84.
- 21 Evan Morris, "Biddy," *The Word Detective*. <http://www.word-detective.com/back-c.html>
- 22 Doug Harper, "Chick," *Online Etymology Dictionary*. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=chick&searchmode=none>
- 23 Christine Ammer, *Cool Cats, Top Dogs, and Other Beastly Expressions* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 34.
- 24 Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. Paul Beale, 8th ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 207.
- 25 "The B Word." *Bitch*. <http://www.bitchmagazine.com/>
- 26 "So What Are We Doing Here, Anyway?" *Bitch*. <http://www.bitchmagazine.com/>
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Kate Zernike, "Oh, to Write a 'Bridget Jones' for Men: A Guy Can Dream," *New York Times*, 22 Feb. 2004: 9.1.
- 29 Perhaps it is merely coincidence that the name of Fielding's heroine is linked to chick. Its synonym, biddy, is a nickname for Bridget. By "extension [it] means any Irish maidservant" (Ammer 152), for as Morris explains in the nineteenth century, young Irish women often had their way to America paid for by upper-class families, "for whom they would then work as domestic servants while they paid off their debt. The practice was so widespread that such women came to be known as 'Biddies,' from a shortening of "Bridget," a common Irish women's name."
- 30 Cris Mazza, "Who's Laughing Now? A Short History of Chick Lit and the Perversion of a Genre" in *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction*, Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, eds (New York: Routledge, 2006), 18.

- 31 James Wolcott, "Hear Me Purr: Maureen Dowd and the Rise of Postfeminist Chick Lit," *New Yorker*, 20 May 1996: 57.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Mazza, "Who's Laughing Now?" 22, 28.
- 34 "Bainbridge Denounces Chick-Lit as 'Froth,'" *Guardian Unlimited*, 23 Aug. 2001. <http://books.guardian.co.uk/bookerprize2001/story/0,1090,541335,00.html>
- 35 Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 2.
- 36 Ibid., 52.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Cris Mazza, "What Is Postfeminist Fiction?" *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction*, Cris Mazza and Jeffrey DeShell, eds (Tallahassee, FL: FC2, 1995), np.
- 39 Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 223.
- 40 Ibid., 232.
- 41 Ibid., 236.
- 42 Ibid., 237.
- 43 Pearson, *I Don't Know How She Does It*, 5.
- 44 Ibid., 173.
- 45 Heather Hewett, "You Are Not Alone: The Personal, the Political, and the New Mommy Lit," in *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction*, Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, eds (New York: Routledge, 2006), 123.
- 46 Whelehan, *The Feminist Bestseller*, 125.
- 47 Quoted in Whelehan, *The Feminist Bestseller*, 128.
- 48 Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 194.
- 49 Ibid., 195.
- 50 Ibid., 153.
- 51 Ibid., 88.

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